

Baku Congress of the Peoples of the East

Manifesto

Baku, 1920



Manifesto of the Congress to the Peoples of the East

September 1920

On September 1, 1920, in the city of Baku, the capital of Azerbaidzhan, a congress of representatives of the peoples of the East was held. Our congress was attended by 1,891 delegates from the following countries: Turkey, Persia, Egypt, India, Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Kashgar, China, Japan, Korea, Arabia, Syria, Palestine, Bukhara, Khiva, Daghestan, Northern Caucasia, Azerbaidzhan, Armenia, Georgia, Turkestan, Ferghana, the Kalmuck Autonomous Region, the Tatar Republic, and the Far Eastern District.

The Congress of the Peoples of the East was convened by the Communist International. Every peasant, every toiler, needs to know what the Communist International is. It is a union of workers and peasants, of the Communists of the whole world, which has set itself the aim of smashing the power of the rich and bringing about the complete equality of all. At the Second World Congress of the Communist International, held in Moscow in August 1920, the following countries were represented: America, Britain, France, Austria, Italy, Spain, Poland, Bohemia, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Switzerland, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Persia, India, China, Japan, Korea, Indochina, Georgia, Azerbaidzhan, Armenia, Khiva, Bukhara, Afghanistan, Argentina, Russia, the Ukraine.

The Communist International wants to put an end not only to the power of the rich over the poor but also to the power of some peoples over others. For this purpose the workers of Europe and America must unite with the peasants and other working elements of the peoples of the East.

The Congress of representatives of the Peoples of the East calls on these peoples to realise such unity, which is needed for the liberation of all the oppressed and all the exploited.

Peoples of the East! Six years ago there broke out in Europe a colossal, monstrous slaughter, a world war in which 35 million human beings were killed, in which hundreds of big towns and thousands of other centres of population were

devastated, a war which ruined all the countries of Europe and subjected all its peoples to the torment of unheard-of want and unprecedented starvation.

This colossal conflict has hitherto been carried on mainly in Europe, affecting Asia and Africa only partially. The war was fought between European peoples, with the peoples of the East participating in it only to a relatively small extent. Some hundreds of thousands of Turkish peasants, deceived by their rulers, who acted for the benefit of the German imperialists: two or three million Indians and Negroes, bought like slaves by the British and French capitalists and, like slaves, hurled to their deaths on the fields of France, far-distant and strange to them, in the service of the interests, alien and unintelligible to them, of the British and French bankers and industrialists.

But although the countries of the East remained aloof from this gigantic conflict and the Eastern peoples played only an insignificant part in it, nevertheless this war was fought not only for the countries of Europe, not only for the countries and peoples of the West, but also for the countries and peoples of the East. It was fought for the partition of the world, and chiefly for the partition of Asia, of the East. It was fought to decide who was to rule over the countries of Asia and whose slaves the peoples of the East should be. It was fought to decide whether the British or the German capitalists should skin the peasants and workers of Turkey, Persia and Egypt.

The monstrous four-year carnage ended in victory for France and Britain. The German capitalists were crushed, and along with them the German people were crushed, destroyed and doomed to starvation. Victorious France, almost all of whose adult population had been wiped out by the war and all of whose industrial areas had been devastated, was bled white by the struggle and left quite powerless after its victory. As a result of the colossal, barbarous slaughter, imperialist Britain emerged as the sole and omnipotent master of Europe and Asia. Britain alone in all Europe was still able to muster sufficient strength, for it had waged the war with other peoples' hands, those of the enslaved peoples, the Indians and Negroes, it had waged the war at the expense of the colonies it oppressed.

Being left the victor and the omnipotent master of half the world, the British Government proceeded to carry out the objectives for which it had waged the war — to consolidate its hold on all the countries of Asia and to enslave, fully and finally, all the peoples of the East.

With no-one to hinder them, and fearing no-one, the handful of greedy banker-capitalists who are at the head of the British state, casting aside all shame, set about openly and brazenly reducing to slavery the peasants and workers of the Eastern countries.

Peoples of the East! You know what Britain has done in India, you know how it has turned the many-millions masses of the Indian peasants and workers into dumb beasts of burden without any rights.

The Indian peasant has to hand over to the British Government a proportion of his crop so large that what remains is not enough to sustain him for even a few months. The Indian worker has to work in the British capitalist's factory for such a miserable pittance that he cannot even buy the daily handful of rice he needs for subsistence. Every year millions of Indians die of hunger and millions perish in the jungles and swamps where they are engaged in heavy labour undertaken by the British capitalists for their own enrichment.

Millions of Indians, unable to find a crust of bread in their own very rich and fertile homeland, are obliged to join the British armed forces, to leave their homeland and spend their whole lives enduring the hard lot of the soldier, fighting endless wars in all corners of the world, against all the peoples of the world, upholding everywhere the ruthless dominion of Britain. While paying with their lives and their blood for the unceasing expansion of the wealth of the British capitalists, securing monstrous profits for them, the Indians themselves enjoy no human rights: the British officers who rule over them, insolent sons of the British bourgeoisie which has grown fat on Indian corpses, do not regard them as human.

An Indian dares not sit at the same table with a Britisher, use the same quarters, enter the same railway carriage, attend the same school. In the eyes of the British bourgeois every Indian is a pariah, a slave, a beast of burden, an animal which dare not have any human feelings or put forward any demands. Every demand, every expression of anger by the Indian peasants and workers when driven to extremities is met by ruthless mass shootings. Hundreds of corpses of those shot cover the streets of revolted Indian villages, and British officers force the survivors to crawl on their bellies, to amuse them, and to lick the boots of their enslavers.

Peoples of the East! You know what Britain has done in Turkey. Britain offered Turkey a peace by which three-quarters of Asia Minor, inhabited exclusively by Ottoman Turks, with all the country's industrial cities, was to pass into the possession of Britain, France, Italy and Greece, while what remained of Turkish territory was to be burdened with such payments that the Ottomans would become permanent undischarged debtors of Britain.

When the Turkish people refused to accept such a peace, which would have destroyed them, the British occupied Constantinople, a holy place to Moslems, dispersed the Turkish Parliament, arrested all the popular leaders, shot the best of

them, and exiled hundreds of others to the island of Malta, where they were imprisoned in the dark and damp dungeons of an ancient fortress. Now the British rule the roost in Constantinople: they have taken from the Turks everything that could be taken. They have taken banks, money, factories, railways, ships, they have closed all the approaches to Asia Minor, thereby depriving the Turks, who are without factories of their own, of the possibility of receiving any goods from Europe. There is now in the whole of Asia Minor not one piece of material, not one fragment of metal. The Turkish peasant is obliged to go about without a shirt and to plough the soil with a wooden plough.

The British used the Greek army to occupy the vilayet of Smyrna, the French to take Adana and colonial troops to take Brussa and Izmid. They have beleaguered the Turks on all sides, and are steadily pushing into Turkish territory, trying to reduce to complete exhaustion the Turkish people who have already been as tormented and ruined as they can be by decades of continuous war.

In those parts of Turkey which the British have already occupied, they scoff and jeer intolerably at the Turkish people, in their usual way. In Constantinople the British have taken all the schools and universities for use as barracks, stopped all Turkish educational activity, closed down all Turkish newspapers, broken up all workers' organisations, filled the prisons with Turkish patriots and placed the entire population under the uncontrolled authority of British police who consider themselves authorised, in broad daylight in the streets of Constantinople, and without any excuse, to hit over the head any persons wearing a fez. As the British see it, if a man wears the fez, if he is a Turk, then he is a creature of an inferior species, a pariah, a slave, a beast of burden, who can be treated like a dog.

In the places they have occupied in Turkey the British treat the Turks like dogs, subjecting them to forced labour and punishing them with blows, and endeavouring by means of all sorts of tricks, base methods and violence to turn Turkey into a conquered country, so that all the Turks may by blows be made beasts of burden to work for the enrichment of the British.

Peoples of the East! What has Britain done to Persia? After crushing a peasants' revolt against the Shah and the landlords, shooting or hanging thousands of Persian peasants, the British capitalists have restored the overthrown rule of the Shah and the landlords, taken from the peasants the landlords' land they had seized and thrust the peasants back into serfdom, making them once again rayats, slaves without rights of the mulkadars.

Then, having bribed the Shah's venal government, the British capitalists have by means of a base, traitorous treaty acquired all Persia and the entire Persian people

as their absolute property. They have laid hands on all the wealth of Persia, they have installed in all the cities of Persia their garrisons of deceived Indian sepoys, bought into slavery, and have begun to behave in Persia as though in a conquered country, treating the nominally independent Persian people as a people who have become slaves.

Peoples of the East! What has Britain done to Mesopotamia and Arabia? It has, without any ado, proclaimed these independent Moslem countries to be its colonies, driven from the land the Arabs who have owned it for centuries, taken from them the best, most fertile valleys of the Tigris and the Euphrates, taken the best pasture — land, which the people need in order to survive, taken the very rich oilfields of Mosul and Basra [sic], and, stripping the Arabs of all means of livelihood, is trying to force them through hunger to become its slaves and its workers.

What has Britain done to Palestine? There, at first, acting for the benefit of Anglo-Jewish capitalists, it drove Arabs from the land in order to give the latter to Jewish settlers; then, trying to appease the discontent of the Arabs, it incited them against these same Jewish settlers, sowing discord, enmity and hatred between all the communities, weakening both [sic] in order that it may itself rule and command.

What has Britain done to Egypt? There the entire native population has for eight decades groaned beneath the heavy yoke of the British capitalists, a yoke even heavier and more ruinous for the people than was that of the Egyptian Pharaohs who built their huge pyramids with slave labour.

What has Britain done to China? That enormous country, Britain, together with its partner, imperialist Japan, turned into a colony and, exploiting and oppressing its 300 million people and poisoning them with opium, it is with its own and Japanese troops putting down with unheard-of cruelty the revolutionary ferment which has begun there. Restoring the old despots whom the people had overthrown, it strives with all its strength to prevent the many-millioned Chinese people from winning their freedom, and keeps them as before under its yoke of despotism, oppression and poverty, so as the better to be able to exploit them.

What has Britain done to Korea, to that flourishing land with a thousand-years-old culture? It has handed over Korea to the Japanese imperialists for them to tear to pieces, and they are now with fire and sword making the Korean people submit to the British and Japanese capitalists.

What is Britain doing to Afghanistan? By bribing the Emir's government it has kept the people in maximum subjection, in the greatest poverty and ignorance, trying to

reduce this country to a desert, in order that this desert may guard India, which Britain oppresses, from any incursion from without.

What is Britain doing with Armenia and Georgia? There by means of its gold it keeps the peasant and worker masses under the yoke of the hated Dashnak and Menshevik governments it has bought, which terrorise and oppress their own peoples and drive them to fight against the peoples of Azerbaidzhan and Russia who have freed themselves from the bourgeois yoke.

Imperialist Britain penetrates even into Turkestan, Khiva, Bukhara, Azerbaidzhan, Daghestan and Northern Caucasia, its agents dart about everywhere, generously scattering, as bribes, British gold which has been extorted from the blood and sweat of the oppressed peoples. Everywhere these agents seek to uphold the tyrants and despots, the khans and landlords, to combat the incipient revolutionary movements, to keep all the peoples, at any cost, in a state of oppression and ruin, in want and ignorance.

Oppression and ruin, want and ignorance among the Eastern peoples serve as sources of enrichment for imperialist Britain.

Peoples of the East! To you belong the richest, most fertile, most extensive lands in the whole world; these lands, which were once the cradle of all mankind, could feed not only their inhabitants but the entire population of the world, and yet now, every year, ten million Turkish, Persian and Indian peasants and workers are unable to find a crust of bread or any employment in their wide and fertile homelands, and are obliged to go abroad and seek a livelihood in alien lands.

They have to do this because in their homelands everything — land, money, banks, factories, workshops — belongs to British capitalists. They are not masters in their own homelands, they dare not give orders there — on the contrary they themselves are ordered about by foreigners, the British capitalists.

This is how it has been up to now, this is how it was also before the war, when imperialist Britain still had rivals in the shape of the German, French and Russian imperialist predators, when it still hesitated to stretch out its paw over all the countries of the East, for fear of receiving a blow on this paw from some rival beast of prey. But now, when imperialist Britain has beaten and rendered powerless one of its rivals, when it has become the omnipotent master of Europe and Asia, now the capitalists who rule Britain are giving free rein to their wolfish appetites and without restraint or shame are sinking voracious teeth and claws into the bleeding body of the peoples of the East.

British capital feels cramped in Europe, it has grown, and cannot find places for investment: besides, the European workers, enlightened by revolutionary consciousness, have become bad slaves: they are not willing to work for nothing, they want good wages. In order that capital may have elbow-room, in order that it may bring in a good profit, in order that the European workers may be thrown a sop so as to hold back the growth of their revolutionary mood, in order that it may be possible to bribe the leading strata of the worker masses, British capital needs fresh land, fresh workers — rightless and unenfranchised slaves.

And the British capitalists think they have found these fresh lands in the Eastern countries, and these rightless and voiceless slaveworkers in the peoples of the East.

The British capitalists are trying to grab Turkey and Persia, Mesopotamia and Arabia, Afghanistan and Egypt, so as to drive all the peasants from the land, after buying from these ruined and indebted peasants, for trivial sums, all their holdings, which they want to merge into huge estates and plantations, on to which will then be driven to work as slave-labourers the Eastern peasants reduced to landlessness. They want, in Turkey, Persia and Mesopotamia, using the cheap labour of the hungry Turkish, Persian and Arab labourers, to build factories, lay out railways and work mines. They want, by means of the cheap goods produced by factory industry, to destroy the handicrafts and the millions of local craftsmen with whom the cities of the East are filled, to throw them into the street, unemployed. They want, by setting up huge trading firms, to ruin the petty local merchants, throwing them too into the street, into the ranks of the proletariat which has only its labour-power to sell.

The British capitalists want to proletarianise completely the peoples of the East, to ruin the economic activity of all the peasants, craftsmen and merchants and to force them all to work as hungry slaves on their plantations and in their factories and mines. And when they have so forced them, they intend to ruin their health with unbearable labour and starve them to death on wretched pay, squeezing sweat and blood out of the enslaved peoples of the East. And this sweat of the workers, this blood of the peasants, they mean to turn into surplus value, into profit, into pure, ringing gold! This is the future which imperialist Britain is preparing for the peoples of the East.

Britain, which is a country of barely forty million people, only one-fortieth of whom constitute the group of oppressors and exploiters, while the remaining 39 million are oppressed and exploited workers and farmers, wants to rule over half the world and to hold in slavery the 800 millions of the peoples of the East. One British bourgeois capitalist, having already forced 39 British workers to work for him, wants to force to work for him, in addition, 2,000 workers and peasants in Persia, Turkey,

Mesopotamia and Egypt. Thus, 2,040 hungry and tortured people, enjoying none of the good things of life, are to work all their lives long for one idle parasite, a British capitalist. One million such exploiters, British bankers and industrialists, want to reduce 800 millions of the peoples of the East to slavery. And it must be said that they know how to achieve their aim — they have neither shame, nor conscience, nor fear; they have nothing but savage greed and unlimited thirst for gain. The ruin, hunger, blood, suffering and groans of 800 million people mean nothing to them. All that matters is profit, all that counts is gain! And in pursuit of this profit and gain the British imperialists have taken a tenacious grip on the throat of the peoples of the East, and are preparing a dark future for them. A future of utter ruin, permanent slavery, rightlessness, oppression and unlimited exploitation — this is what is in store for the peoples of the East if the present government remains in power in Britain, if imperialist Britain keeps its strength and stabilises its rule over the Eastern countries. A miserable handful of British bankers devour hundreds of millions of peasants and workers in the East.

But this shall not be!

In face of the British capitalists, the rulers of imperialist Britain, there is rising up the organised might of the peasants and workers of the East, united under the red banner of the Communist International, under the red banner of the union of revolutionary workers, who have made it their aim to liberate the whole world and all mankind from every form of exploitation and oppression.

The First Congress of representatives of the Peoples of the East loudly proclaims to the whole world, to the capitalist rulers of Britain: This shall not be! You dogs shall not devour the peoples of the East, you wretched handful of oppressors shall not reduce to everlasting serfdom hundreds of millions of Eastern workers and peasants. You have bitten off too big a piece, more than you can chew, and it will choke you!

The peoples of the East have long stagnated in the darkness of ignorance under the despotic yoke of their own tyrant rulers, and under that of foreign capitalist conquerors. But the roar of the world-wide conflict, and the thunder of the Russian workers' revolution, which has released the Eastern people of Russia from the century-old chains of capitalist slavery, has awakened them, and now aroused from their sleep of centuries, they are rising to their feet.

They are waking up and are hearing the call to a holy war, to a ghazavat: this is our call! It is the call of the First Congress of representatives of the Peoples of the East, united with the revolutionary proletariat of the West under the banner of the Communist International. Thus we — representatives of the toiling masses of all the

peoples of the East: India, Turkey, Persia, Egypt, Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Kashgar, China, Indochina, Japan, Korea, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaidzhan, Daghestan, Northern Caucasia, Arabia, Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine, Khiva, Bukhara, Turkestan, Ferghana, Tataria, Bashkiria, Kirghizia, etc., united in unbreakable union among ourselves and with the revolutionary workers of the West summon our peoples to a holy war. We say:

Peoples of the East! You have often heard the call to holy war, from your governments, you have marched under the green banner of the Prophet, but all those holy wars were fraudulent, serving only the interests of your self-seeking rulers, and you, the peasants and workers, remained in slavery and want after these wars. You conquered the good things of life for others, but yourselves never enjoyed any of them.

Now we summon you to the first real holy war, under the red banner of the Communist International. We summon you to a holy war for your own well-being, for your own freedom, for your own life!

Britain, the last powerful imperialist predator left in Europe, has spread its dark wings over the Eastern Moslem countries, and is trying to turn the peoples of the East into its slaves, into its booty. Slavery! Frightful slavery, ruin, oppression and exploitation is being brought by Britain to the peoples of the East. Save yourselves, peoples of the East!

Arise and fight against this beast of prey! Go forward as one man into a holy war against the British conquerors! Stand up, Indian exhausted by hunger and unbearable slave labour! Stand up, Anatolian peasant crushed by taxes and usury! Stand up, Persian rayat strangled by the mulkadars! Stand up, Armenian toiler driven out into the barren hills! Stand up, Arabs and Afghans, lost in sandy deserts and cut off by the British from all the rest of the world! Stand up and fight against the common enemy, imperialist Britain!

High waves the banner of the holy war ... This is a holy war for the liberation of the Peoples of the East, for the ending of the division of mankind into oppressor peoples and oppressed peoples, for complete equality of all peoples and races, whatever language they may speak, whatever the colour of their skin and whatever the religion they profess.

Into the holy war to end the division of countries into advanced and backward, dependent and independent, metropolitan and colonial!

Into the holy war for the liberation of all mankind from the yoke of capitalist and imperialist slavery, for the ending of all forms of oppression of one people by another and of all forms of exploitation of man by man!

Into the holy war against the last citadel of capitalism and imperialism in Europe, against the nest of pirates and bandits by sea and land, against the age-old oppressor of all the peoples of the East, against imperialist Britain!

Into the holy war for freedom, independence and happiness for all the peoples of the East, all the East's millions of peasants and workers enslaved by Britain!

Peoples of the East! In this holy war all the revolutionary workers and all the oppressed peasants of the East will be with you. They will help you, they will fight and die along with you.

It is the First Congress of representatives of the Peoples of the East that tells you this. Long live the unity of all the peasants and workers of the East and of the West, the unity of all the toilers, all the oppressed and exploited. Long live the battle headquarters of this united movement — the Communist International! May the holy war of the peoples of the East and of the toilers of the whole world against imperialist Britain burn with unquenchable fire!

Honorary members of the Presidium

Radek (Russia), Bela Kun (Hungary), Rosmer (France), Quelch (Britain), Reed (America), Steinhardt-Gruber (Austria), Jansen (Holland), Shablin (Balkan Federation), Yoshiharo (Japan).

Zinoviev, Chairman of the Congress

Members of the Presidium

Ryskulov, Abdurashidov, Karriyev, (Turkestan); Mustafa Sub'hi (Turkey); Wang (China); Karid (India); Mulabekdchan, Radhmanov (Khiva); Mukhamedov (Bukhara); Korkmasov, (Daghestan); Digurov (Terek Region); Aliyev (Northern Caucasia); Kostanyan (Armenia); Narimanov (Azerbaijan); Yenikeyev (Tatar Republic); Amur-Sanan (Kalmuck Republic); Makharadze (Georgia); Haidar Khan (Persia); Aga-Zade (Afghanistan); Narbutabekov (Tashkent); Makhmudov (Ferghana); Takhsim-Baari, Kaavis-Mahomed (Anatolia); Kuleyev (Transcaspia); Niyas Kuli (Turkmenia); Kari Tadzhi (Samarkand); Nazyr-Sedyki (India); Sidadzheddin, Kardash-Ogly (Daghestan); Yelchiev, Musayev (Azerbaijan); Azim (Afghanistan); Abdulayev (Khiva).

Ostrovsky, Secretary to the Congress.

(Kommunistichesky Internatsional, no. 15, December 20, 1920)

From:

<http://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/baku/index.htm>

Course: The National Democratic Revolution

12022, Baku Congress of the Peoples of the East, Manifesto, 1920

4416 words